

[Medieval Georgia]

RELIGION

771 revered and neglected by their sanctimonious successors. The priest-mind took the rough clean spirit of the Founder and the rugged sacrifices of these old and dim-remembered men who found in it a divine message for humanity; and violent and abortive, cunning and obsequious, the priest-mind turned it into the sour wine of the Medieval church.

794 It is difficult to appreciate the extent to which the Church checked the development of human knowledge during the Middle Ages. Education was the preserve of the Church in Georgia, as in other countries of the Christian East and West. The wealth and the intellectual monopoly of the Church attracted to it much of the best human material of each successive century. This material was physically sterilized in the monasteries and mentally sterilized in the copying and illumination of sacred books and in the development of bleak theses upon futile religious controversies. Georgian ecclesiastical literature produced nothing of intellectual value with the exception of certain parts of the Annals and some historical manuscripts, and through the pages of these works there runs the endless thread of priestly perversion of the truth to suit the moral reclamations—or more frequently the purely material designs on property—of the Church. It was left to the wild growth of the troubadour literature—evolved under the free-thinking influence of the Persian poets and the Classic philosophers—to express the natural art and creative genius of the Georgian spirit.

● 795
659 The Georgian Church remained always in close alliance with the Greek. At an early period Greek ecclesiasts were active in Georgia, and Georgian monks were numerous in Syria and Greece. The Georgian Church was originally subordinate to the Patriarchs of Antioch, but the Armenian Church exercised a closer influence on Georgian ritual and dogma, until, in the second half of the fifth century, the decisions of the Council of Chalchedon produced the Schism which led to the separation of the Armenian from the Greek Church. Thenceforward the Georgians, following in the train of Greek religious thought, carried on a long and often politically disastrous feud with the Armenians, although both David the Restorer and Tamara called Councils in an attempt to reconcile the dogmatic scruples of the contending priests. At the same time the Churches of Byzantium and Georgia were closely associated. The Byzantine Emperors endowed churches in Georgia, and made donations for the restoration of others

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795 including the Cathedral of Mtskheta, while the Georgian kings
659 assisted the considerable colonies of Georgian monks who settled in the Byzantine territories by the foundation and endowment of churches and monasteries on Mount Athos, at Antioch, Jerusalem, and on Mount Sinai.

659 The Georgian Church in two respects bears an important
779 relation to the political history of the country. First Christianity, both in Zoroastrian and Mussulman days, represented the influence of Byzantium and the Christian West as opposed to that of Persia and the East. And the prosperity and power of the Church fluctuated according to the respective strength of Christendom and Islam. Secondly Georgia did not experience the struggle between Church and State which was taking place in other parts of Christendom. This fact must be attributed directly to the menace of Islam. The influence of the Church over the peasantry was too valuable to the King, and the armed protection of the King was too important to the Church, to allow either of them to attempt to weaken or dispense with the other. Thus when the Arab invasion drove the Iberian rulers over the Mountains of Likhi, the Catholicos of Mtskheta followed them, while during the abeyance of the Bagratids, between the seventh and tenth centuries, the Catholicosate apparently lapsed. The revival of the Georgian monarchy saw the reappearance of a Catholicos at Mtskheta and the rich endowment of churches and monasteries. While Henry II in England was wrangling with Thomas à-Becket, the Georgian kings were showering favours and privileges on their clergy.

795 During the great days of the Bagratid monarchy, the
659 Georgian Church flourished and grew rich under the protection of and in alliance with the Crown.¹ And it is but rarely that that friction between the two dominant bodies in the state, which was troubling the politics of contemporary England and of the Western Empire, and which, under the Iconoclastic Emperors had arisen in Byzantium, is to be noted in the history of medieval Georgia. David Aghmashenebeli indeed, carried out a drastic cleansing of the Church, but his conduct is approved by the monkish Annalists. Tamara supported by the nobles tried without success to remove the unpopular Catholicos Mikélo Mirionisdze, who "was generally detested,"² and both Giorgi IV Lasha and Dmitri II incurred

¹ See particularly Brosset, *H. de la G.*, I, 317-16, for the great acquisitions of property by the Church during the reign of Bagrat IV.

² *Ibid.*, p. 423.

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the anger of the Catholicos of their time on account of their way of living. [195]
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The two powers of the Church and the Crown seem to have been virtually interdependent. The Catholicos and his bishops held wide lands and owned great numbers of serfs—"the sons of Mitzkheta". The Church property was free from taxation except in events of emergency, and the Catholicos enjoyed a share of state dues and in addition such perquisites as the takings of the toll-house at Gori and a tax on dye-houses. Many *mtavarni* and *aznavarni* were his vassals; and the levies from the estates of the Church went on campaign under their own commander, who was, in principle, independent of the royal surveillance. Together the Crown and the Church monopolized all the power and the greater part of the wealth of the country, and on terms of amity and confidence, the one supported the other. The King nominated a new Catholicos, and the Catholicos presided over the assembly of lords, spiritual and temporal, at the coronation of a new king.

"An affront", says the Code of Wakhtangi, "of whatever nature it may be, made against the King or the Catholicos, is of equal gravity; for if the first is master of the body, the second is of the soul, and they have both received the consecration of God and men."¹

Much of the wealth that poured into the country as a result of the consolidation of the monarchy and the successful wars against the Muslims, found its way into the hands of the ecclesiasts. Triumphant kings endowed the Church with new lands and further numbers of serfs, and successful soldiers minted their loot into richly bejewelled icons and the spoils of Muslim harfms into sacerdotal plate.

Hundreds of churches and monasteries sprang up, constructed at great cost by architects, stone-masons and wood-carvers, many of whom were brought from Byzantium. The churches were full of gorgeous vestments, of rare illuminated holy books, of miraculous relics presented by noble devotees returned from the Holy Land,² of costly gold and silver vessels. At the boards of the Catholicos and of his bishops, holy men and their lay guests feasted to their full on the first fruits of the land. And the Church was chosen by the cadets of the aristocracy as a career more lucrative and more pleasing than service at the court, or in the trains of the great *didebulni*. 346
795

¹ Brousset, *H. de la G.*, Intro. et Add., p. cx. In the reign of Bagrat IV the Annalists refer to the Catholicos as "the Holy King Melkisedek" (I, 313).

² For an account of the curious relics in the possession of the Dadiani see Chardin, 1666 ed., p. 99.

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795 With the fall of the national monarchy and the predominance of the Mussulman powers began the decline of the Georgian Church. The Turkish capture of Constantinople severed all connection with the Greeks, who had so profoundly influenced every aspect of Georgian religious life, its doctrines, its rites and its architecture. Finally when the Georgian Kingdom was divided, the authority of the Church became divided too.

795 The writ of the Catholicos of Mitzkheta ceased to extend beyond Kartli. The King of Imereti revived the Catholicosate of Abkhazeti which henceforward exercised a shadowy authority over the Western Caucasus and the Rioni valley; and in Kakheti the Bishop of Alaverdi, in Mingrelia the Metropolitan of Bedia, in Guria the Bishop of Shemokhmedi, followed the separatist tendencies of the local rulers. The influence and efficiency of the clergy speedily declined. All the European travellers in Georgia during the seventeenth century unite in condemning their ignorance, their drunkenness, their immorality and their levity. The bishops were hardly to be distinguished from the ordinary feudal proprietors, and their seats were bought and sold by or conferred as rewards upon the relatives of the different ruling princes. The nobles, demoralized by the humiliating political conditions, which often compelled them to embrace Islam, to send their sons in hostage to be educated by the mullahs of Isfahan, or to give their daughters into Persian or Turkish harems, had assumed a cynical indifference towards their religion. They combined Mussulman polygamy with Christian drunkenness and interested themselves in either religion only to the extent of celebrating with admirable impartiality the feast-days of both.

The Kartlian kings were frequently required by the Shahs to profess an outward devotion to Islam, and Pitton de Tournefort gives us an amusing picture of the religious exercises of the ruler, contemporary with his visit.

"Le Prince de Tiflis", he says, "étoit du Rite Grec, mais on l'obligea de se faire circoncire. On dit que ce malheureux professait les deux religions, car il alloit à la Mosquée et venoit à la Messe chez les Capucins, où il beuvoit à la santé de la Sainte." ¹

791 Only among the peasantry and the artisan class did any true religious sentiment survive, and this, in reality, took the form of national feeling against the Persians and Turks.

¹ Pitton de Tournefort, *Relation d'un Voyage de Levant* (Paris, 1717), tome II, p. 310.

651 sians imposed such an onerous tax on cattle and trees that, five years later, the army of Nadir Shah was beset by famine. But the Persian exactions continued, until in 1747 the King of Kartalinia effected a kind of general strike by withdrawing all the working population into the hills and strong places. Lastly, in consequence of the wars, the people were frequently subjected to a special tax, enduring over a period of years, the proceeds of which were spent in the repair of churches and castles and in the redemption of slaves.

175 In two respects the Church in Georgia bears an important
659 relation to the political history of the country. Firstly, Chris-
75 tianity, both in Zoroastrian and Mussulman days, represented the influence of Byzantium and the West as opposed to that of Persia and the East. And the prosperity and power of the Church fluctuated according to the respective strength of Christendom and Islam. Secondly, Georgia did not experience the struggle between Church and State which was taking place in other parts of Christendom. This fact must be attributed directly to the menace of Islam. The influence of the Church with the peasantry was too valuable to the King, and the armed protection of the King was too important to the Church, to allow of either of them attempting to weaken or dispense with the other. The revival of the Georgian monarchy saw the reappearance of a Catholicos at Mtskheta, and the rich endowment of churches and monasteries. While Henry II in [175] England was wrangling with Thomas à Becket, the Georgian Kings were showering favours and privileges on their clergy. The Catholicos and his bishops held wide lands and owned great numbers of slaves; many nobles were the vassals of Mtskheta. Besides this, the clergy were free from all taxation, being liable only to contribute in a national emergency.

175 During the great days of the Bagratid monarchy the Church
659 flourished and grew rich, under the protection of and in alliance with the Crown. But rarely do we note traces of that friction between the two dominant bodies in the State which was disturbing the politics of Western Christendom. The Catholicos, indeed, was recognised virtually as the equal of the King, and his feudal levies were commanded by an independent General, nominated by himself.

The two powers seem to have been interdependent; the King nominated a new Catholicos; the Catholicos presided over the Assembly of lords and bishops at the coronation of a new King. Together the King and the Church monopolised the greater part of the wealth of the country. Hundreds of

771 Consequently, if successful in hunting, the Svan considers it his
176 duty to bring, first of all, a thank-offering to the deity—the protector of game—in order to appease him and secure his help in the future.¹³ The Svans usually bring their sacrifices to highly situated places. To insure the success of individuals as well as the prosperity of the country as a whole, the Svan generally subscribes to the protection of the local deity. In spite of such opinions, the Svans have a notion of the Christian Trinity, although obscure. They were converted to Christianity, as were the Khevsurs, Pshavs, and Tushes, in the historic past, and therein may lie the historical explanation of the fall and degeneration of Christianity in Svanetia as well as elsewhere in the Georgian Highlands. Historical records clearly demonstrate that the Svans and their land formed a part of the Georgian kingdom.¹³ It is known that from the time of Queen Tamar's father the Georgian chronicles divided the whole of Georgia into seven parts according to the seven territories inhabited by the Georgian nation; and in the formation of these seven provinces, Svanetia was included.

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Besides their political affiliation, the Svans had other ties with Georgia in their religious life. The great number of ruined and ancient churches, containing numerous preserved manuscripts, icons, crosses, etc., proves that efforts were made by the kings of Georgia to spread and strengthen the Christian faith in Svanetia. The number of churches there is very large; they are found even in the most insignificant villages; in some there are as many as five or six.¹⁴ They are especially numerous in Free Svanetia, many half-dilapidated and ruined churches and sacred places where, according to tradition, churches once stood. In Ushkul, for example, there are twenty such ruins.

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Examining the old Georgian ordinances, called *gujaras*, we find that the Georgian clergy exercised a great influence upon Svanetia, where it appears Christianity was at that time solidly established. The church of Svanetia stood under the rule of the Abkhazian,

¹³ The details concerning this subject are brought out in the chapter on Contract and Group Solidarity.

¹⁴ Bakradze: a, 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

23

or Imerian, Catholics,¹⁵ and later under the Bishop of Lechkum, 795 ● whose residence was in the village of Tsageri on the river Tsenis-tskali. The priests in Svanetia were in the majority of cases natives of the country who were installed in their office by the special ordination from the above-mentioned Georgian clerical dignitaries. But when this union of Svanetia with the neighboring Georgian provinces was interrupted, owing to political causes, the church of Svanetia was left alone without any spiritual support and guidance; and taking, in addition, the illiteracy of the people and the ignorance of the native priests, it is not difficult to understand the motives of deterioration of the Christian Church in Svanetia. Here happened precisely the same thing that took place among the Khevsurs, Pshavs, and Tushes: Christianity fell into degradation, and the omitted and forgotten things were replaced by the fantasy of the people with primitive beliefs and practices; creating, instead of Christianity, a mixture of Christianity with Primitive religion. In spite of this confusion in their religion, the Svans up until the present time, conserve in distorted form the whole ancient order of the church services, have their own priests, called *bapi* or *papi*, and jealously guard their churches and holy images.¹⁶

The desertion and decline of Christianity, among the Svans and other groups of the Georgian Highlanders had a place also among the other ethnic groups of the Caucasus. The same causes created strikingly similar results. Thus the Circassians, occupying the northwestern portion of the Caucasian peninsula and the northeastern coast of the Black Sea, preserved the remains of the Christian religion as did the Georgian Highlanders. The Circassians, prior to their acceptance of the Mohammedan religion, were Christians, and later their religion presented a mixture of Christian, Mohammedan and Primitive rites. Being nominally Mohammedans, they maintained their veneration of the cross; celebrated, though in distorted fashion, the Lord's Supper and other practices reminiscent of the rites of the Greek Orthodox Church. Persons who lived among them have furnished information about the dis-

¹⁵ Bakradze: a, 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

- 795 tortured Christian rites and the obsolete and ruined places of worship. The ruins of the old churches found in the country of the Abkhazians were surprising to European investigators by their beauty and the magnificence of their architecture.

In addition to the ruins of churches, many other remains of Christianity have been preserved by the people, such as the various Christian rites practiced by the Circassians.

- 778 The religious practices of the Circassians bear a close resemblance to the religious rites and festivals practiced by the Georgian Highlanders. Another point of resemblance between these two groups is their veneration of trees.¹⁷ The places of worship in the Georgian Highlands are usually situated in or near a wood which is the property of the church and regarded as sacred, and from [313] which the Svan will permit no one to cut down a single tree. These woods usually surround the ruins of ancient Svan churches.¹⁸ As an illustration, the Russian investigator, I. A. Bartolomei, mentions the sacred forest in the community of Kali in Svanetia. "I saw the enclosure of a small monastery surrounded by a dense forest," writes Mr. Bartolomei.¹⁹ "This was the monastery of St. Quirik, revered as almost the greatest sanctuary in Free Svanetia Incidentally, it should be noted that the community of Kali complains a great deal for want of a proper forest. In reply to my remark that the place in which we were traveling was covered with ancient trees, the guides told me that this belonged to the church and no one was allowed to cut a single branch from it for fear of God's wrath. If this were done, the people believed that He would send hail of enormous size to punish them."

As Bartolomei says, the want of wood and the scarcity of trees in Kali likewise attracted the attention of D. Z. Bakradze to the superb forests belonging to the monastery of St. Quirik. He, too, writes about this, noting the obedience of the people to religious rules. "These forests," says Bakradze,²⁰ "consist of pine trees and are kept in sacred esteem by the natives, so that in spite of the

¹⁷ Chursin, g.

¹⁸ Teptsov: a, 34.

¹⁹ Bartolomei: 151-3.

²⁰ Bakradze: a, 51.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

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Caucasus, which are removed—all except the dagger—when entering a church. 793

Although the ¹paps are ignorant and mostly illiterate, yet they render great service to their country and their people. They have preserved many objects of great archeological and scientific value and have hindered the spreading of Mahommedan teaching in the country by upholding the Christian faith, although in a distorted and mutilated form. [795] ●

The paps conduct services in the churches, perform wedding and funeral ceremonies, baptize children, kill the sacrificial animals, and see to the punctual observance by the people of the established holidays.

The Svans have numerous holidays created by religious and climatic conditions. Thanks to the high elevation of the country in the Alpine regions of the Caucasus, the cold winter lasts for half a year, and only during the remaining six months is work carried on in the open. But in spite of such a short time, the Svans work only four days a week, and the other three—Friday, Saturday, and Sunday—are passed in rest, counting as holidays. On these days no one is allowed to work; he is permitted only to hunt. The people believe that in case of disobedience of this rule, not only the guilty person but his whole community will be severely punished by a pestilence, a bad harvest, hail or other mischief. Therefore, in order to avoid the danger in the summer months of July and August, when the fields are full of ripening grain, every man in the village is obliged to take a public oath by which he solemnly promises to abstain from any kind of work on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Anyone who is found guilty of disobeying this rule is obliged to pay a fine amounting to from one to three rubles. The money is used to cover communal expenses, such as religious festivals, sacrifices, and other items. Besides these three holidays, the Svans are forbidden during the months of May and June to make cheese or to eat any food prepared from milk on Fridays. 796 792

In addition to observing holidays in order to insure a good harvest, the people bring sacrifices to God almost every Sunday during the months of July and August. These public sacrifices are [10, Swan objects, see cat. 116, pp 35-37 -- Analyst]

682 all kinds of crimes committed. The amount of blood-money required from the offender differed according to sex, age, social status, physical condition, and religion of the slain person. In the payment of the *wergild* the culprit was assisted by his relatives, who were also co-jurors when an oath was taken.

The amount of the *wergild* for the life of a man was higher than that for a woman. Among the Tushes, the murderer of a woman was required to pay an indemnity of thirty cows, which was exactly half the blood-money required for a man's life.¹³

Children and old people were exempt from blood vengeance.

525 In communities where the social life shows stratification, the *wergild* differed according to the social standing of the offender. In Free Svanetia¹³ the *wergild* for the murder of a nobleman was equal to the amount of two bloods.

The same situation prevailed in the whole Georgian Kingdom in times past. "Murder was called blood," Prince Vakhushet writes.¹⁴ "When a man had killed someone equal to himself socially, he was obliged to pay for the blood with silver or cattle, according to the social status of the victim, and the King might arrest, punish, and even kill him. If a man of high social standing killed a man of a lower class, he was obliged to pay for the blood; but if a man of a lower class killed a man of a higher class, he had to pay for the blood and was also deprived of his property for a few years."

The *wergild* for a pregnant woman was higher than that for a woman in normal physical condition.

• [OK] There was also religious discrimination in the payment of the fine for the blood. The *wergild* for the murder of a Christian was higher than that for a Mohammedan. Among the Tushes, the blood-money for killing a Christian consisted of sixty cows, and for a Mohammedan only half that number.

436 The payments¹⁵ were made, not with money, but with various
682 goods available in the community: cows, horses, sheep, copper pots, arms, etc. This is not difficult to comprehend if we take into

¹³ Khakhanov: a, 53.

¹⁴ Besnoville: 106.

¹⁵ Vakhushet: 6.

[i.e., of wergild] see pp 145-146 -- Analyst]

Ⓒ.
Ⓔ. 197 LANGUAGE: Georgian (Kartuli ena) belongs with Mingrelian, Laz, and Swan, to the S Caucasian (or Kartvelian) language family. It has an old literary tradition going back to the 5th century A. D., and a script of its own.

SUBDIVISIONS: The Georgian dialects fall into two groups: E and W Georgian. E dialects: Kartluri (with sub-dialects Meskh and Dzhavakh), K'akhuri, Ingilouri, Tushuri, Khevsuruli, Pshauri, Mokhev, Mtiuli, (Fereidan in Iran). W dialects: Imeruli Rach'uli, Lechkhum, Guruli (including Adzhar), Imerkhev (in Turkey).

Ⓒ.
Ⓔ. 241 TRADITIONAL ECONOMY: Agriculture, 231 cattle-breeding; horticulture; viniculture; arts and crafts.

Ⓒ.
Ⓔ. 795 RELIGION: Eastern Orthodox; Roman Catholic minority; only the Adzhar and part of the Ingilo are Muslim. There are a number of Georgian-speaking Jewish villages in different parts of the Georgian SSR, totaling 21, 471 persons (1926, Russian census), in Russian referred to as Gruzinskie evrei (Georgian Jews).
[162]

2. MINGRELIANS

C.
G.

101 NAME: SELF-DESIGNATION: Margali; own name of country: Odishi.

RUSSIAN DESIGNATIONS: Megrely, Megrel'tsy, Mingrel'tsy.

OTHER DESIGNATIONS: (Georgian:) Megreli, the country: Samegrelo; (Abkhaz:) Aghrwa; (Svan:) Myzan, the country: Zan

C.
G.
161

NUMBER: 1897 239,625 (Russian census)
1926 242,990 (Russian census, ethn.)
284,834 (Russian census, ling.)

C.
G.
162

LOCATION: Territory N of lower Rioni river and W of the Tskhenis-Tskali, extending along the Black Sea Coast from the mouth of the Rioni up to Ochamchiri (rayons Zugdidi and Senaki in W of Georgian SSR). Also in and around the cities of the Abkhaz ASSR.

C.
G.
197

LANGUAGE: Mingrelian (Megreli nina) and the very closely related Laz form the so-called Zan member of the S Caucasian (Kartvelian) language group, which also includes Georgian and Svan. The language is not written, Georgian being used as the literary language.

SUBDIVISIONS: Two groups of dialects, which differ very little: West (Samurzakan-Zugdidi) and East Mingrelian (Senaki).

C.
G.
241

TRADITIONAL ECONOMY: Agriculture; horticulture; viniculture; sericulture.

C.
G.
718

RELIGION: Eastern Orthodox.

(Georgia RII) Laz; (6-1)

3. LAZ Ch'ani, the country: Ch'aneti.

C.
101

NAME: SELF-DESIGNATION: Lazi

RUSSIAN DESIGNATIONS: Laxy; for the language also: Chanskii iazyk.

OTHER DESIGNATIONS: (Turkish:) Lazi; (Georgian:) Ch'ani, the country: Ch'aneti.)

C.
161

NUMBER: 1926 643 (Russian census, ethn.)
730 (Russian census, ling.)

The Turkish census of 1945 lists 46,987 speakers of Laz, so that the overwhelming majority of them live in Turkish territory.

C.
162

LOCATION: Between the Chorokh river and the Black Sea coast up to the area of Pazar (Atina) on Turkish territory; also in the Chkhala basin (left tributary of the Chorokh) on Russian territory), (Adzhar ASSR, within Georgian SSR).

C.
197

LANGUAGE: Laz (Ch'anuri nena) and the very closely related Mingrelian form the so-called Zan member of the S Caucasian (Kartvelian) language-group, which includes also Georgian and Svan. The language is not written, Georgian being used as literary language in the USSR, Turkish in Turkey.

SUBDIVISIONS: Two dialect-groups: West (Vitse-Arkhave and Atina) and East Laz (Hopa, Chkhala).

C.
241
226

TRADITIONAL ECONOMY: Agriculture, fishing, trade.

C.
795

RELIGION: Islam (Sunni)

7: Columbia U. S-4, 5 1956 RHI Caucasia RHI
Georgia RI 1

C.
G.
241
231
231

TRADITIONAL ECONOMY: Agriculture,
cattle-raising, hunting, apiculture.

C.
G.
795

RELIGION: Eastern Orthodox.

C.
G.
197 LANGUAGE: Abkhaz belongs to NW Caucasian,
together with Circassian and Ubykh (the
latter no longer spoken in the Caucasus).
Two dialects have been reduced to writing:
in the Abkhaz ASSR that of the Abzhui, in
the Cherkes AO that of the Tapanta. The
speakers of the Abaza dialects are all bi-
lingual and speak also the Kabardian dialect
of Circassian. In the Abkhaz ASSR know-
ledge of Georgian is widespread.

SUBDIVISION: Abkhaz has five major dialects:
Bzyb', Abzhui, Samurzakan', Ashkharwa and
Tapanta. The speakers of the latter two
dialects are known as Abaza (R. Abazintsy),
though linguistically the first four dialects
form one group, while Tapanta stands apart.

C
G
101 Further tribal names (Russ. form):
Tsebeldintsy, Dzhigety; (Abaza:) Beshilbei,
Tam, Barakei.

C.
G.
241 TRADITIONAL ECONOMY: Cattle-breeding;
231 agriculture, viniculture; apiculture.

C.
G.
745 RELIGION: Islam (Sunni); Eastern Orthodox.

NOTE ON THE GEORGIAN CHURCH

C.
G.
● 795 Christianity spread into Georgia by two routes: into Western Georgia from Greece, and into Eastern Georgia, i. e. ancient Iberia, from Syria and Armenia; this dualism is still apparent in the religious terminology of Georgian. The new religion was opposed not only by indigenous paganism--as everywhere--but also by Zoroastrianism, which was widespread in the Caucasus. According to legend, in the 4th century, the Iberian king Mirian was converted to Christianity by a woman prisoner from Armenia, St. Nino, who is worshipped as Illuminatrix of Georgia. The primate of the Georgian church, who bore the title of Katholikos, was at first subordinated to Antiochia, though ritual and dogma were more closely influenced by the Armenian church. After the council of Chalcedon (451) the Georgians broke with the Monophysite churches of the Orient and attached themselves to Byzantine Orthodoxy; the Armenians remained in the other camp, which led to a long and often politically disastrous feud with the latter. By the 11th century the autocephalous patriarch of the Georgian church, residing in Mtskheta, was completely independent.

C.
G.
779 In Georgian monasteries, including those founded by Georgian monks in Jerusalem, on Mt. Sinai, Mt. Athos and elsewhere, much ecclesiastical literature was translated, and some works are preserved only in the Georgian translation. Original hagiography is considered to begin with

Σ.
779 the life of St. Shushanik († 474). The Georgian text of the gospels as it is used until today in divine worship goes back to a revision after the Greek by the Hagiorite Euthymius († 1028); a copy of an older text shows that the Georgian gospels originally were translated from Armenian and afterwards were revised according to the Greek.

Σ.
● 795 The Georgian Orthodox church, which always represented the influence of Byzance and
659 of the West as opposed to that of Persia and the East, has not known serious conflicts with the State, due to the continuous menace of Islam to both. The autocephaly of the Georgian Church was violated by the Russians in 1810, the office of Katholikos being abolished. It was restored in 1917; since then, the fate of the Georgian church has been the same as that of other religious organizations in the USSR.